



Guest Artist Recital

by

Jay Julio, Viola
Josh Tatsuo Cullen, Piano

Monday, March 2, 2026, 7:30pm
SVS Recital Hall

Program

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| Island Baby Reflections (2021) | <i>world premiere of viola version</i> | Courtney Bryan
(b. 1982) |
| Kundiman (1923) | <i>regional premiere of viola arrangement</i> | Nicanor Abelardo , arr. Jay Julio
(1893-1934) |
| Sonata for Viola and Piano (2011) | <i>regional premiere</i> | James Lee III
(b. 1975) |
| i. Tranquillo | | |
| ii. Cantabile | | |
| iii. Giocoso | | |
| Morpheus (1917) | | Rebecca Clarke
(1886-1979) |
| Le Grand Tango (1982) | | Astor Piazzolla
(1921-1992) |

Program Notes

NOLA native, Steinway Artist and 2023 MacArthur Fellow **Courtney Bryan** (b. 1983) wrote *Island Baby Reflections* for violinist Jennifer Koh and her solo violin commissioning project *Arco Collective* in 2021, when COVID-19 conditions forced touring classical performers to seek alternative avenues for work. Based on a Korean lullaby of the same name, Bryan's work flows in this performance without break into the next piece, a gentle prelude to the evening.

Nicanor Santa Ana Abelardo (1893-1934) is among the Philippines' great historical composers; his works for voice, Filipino instruments, chamber groups, and orchestral forces alike continue to inform Western-style classical music in the Philippines today. His music traces a lineage from Spanish colonial styles to the first seeds of Tagalog/Filipino nationalism, though his early death from alcoholism led him never to see a free and independent Philippines. Abelardo was a member of the inaugural class at the University of the Philippines Conservatory of Music in 1916, being added to the teaching faculty in 1918. He spent a single year outside the Philippines, studying at the Chicago Musical College (incorporated now into Roosevelt University) from 1931-1932. Though his music was received warmly, he struggled to succeed in Depression-era America, and he returned to the Philippines for the rest of his life. His *Kundiman* for violin and piano, arranged by Jay Julio for viola and piano, is named after the word for Tagalog art song and blends Spanish-era harmonies with a Filipino form and sensibility.

Michigan native **James Lee III** (b. 1975) on his *Sonata for Viola and Piano* (2011), receiving its Midwest premiere today:

“Commissioned by Marcus Thompson, James Lee’s Sonata for Viola and Piano was completed in 2010. The first movement is loosely based on the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Revelation, in which two beasts arise, one from the sea and the other from the land. The viola opens with a rising figure that is also integrated within the fabric of the piano writing. The music conveys the aggressive nature of the two beasts. The second movement (Cantabile espressivo) is an emotionally charged retrospective of the first movement, in which the melodic material continues to develop until it modulates to the key of C-sharp minor. The last movement (Giocoso) is a rhapsodic rondo. Marked by intense rhythmic activity in both instruments, this movement surges forward in perpetual motion to its conclusion.”

English-born, NYC long-term resident **Rebecca Helfreirich Clarke** (1886-1979) is best known perhaps for her *Viola Sonata*, written in 1919 and tying for first place in the Berkshire Chamber Music Competition with Ernest Bloch’s equally iconic Suite for Viola and Piano. Yet her *Morpheus*, written in 1918 under the pseudonym “Anthony Trent” for her own performing uses, reveals her to be far more than a one-hit wonder. Named after the Greek god of dreams, it sounds almost like a demo of the viola sonata’s third movement; sonically, it traverses Impressionist soundscapes mixed with Clarke’s signature folksong-like melodies.

Argentinian tango composer and bandoneon player **Astor Pantaleon Piazzolla** (1921-1992) is most famous for his works that fuse traditional tango aesthetics with Western classical music, jazz, and rock styles, and *Le Grand Tango*, originally for cello and piano and written for Mstislav Rostropovich, is representative of his oeuvre. Easily over ten minutes long, it equals the length of a typical tanda (set of tango songs) and likewise sets the traditional tango rhythm into many moods and tempi.

Performer Biographies

From Uniondale, New York, first-generation Filipino-American violist and composer **Jay Julio** splits time between NYC, Philadelphia, and on tour. Jay serves as Assistant Principal Violist of the Opera Philadelphia Orchestra and has performed with the American Composers Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony, and for over a year with the *Angelica* touring company of *Hamilton*. Solo appearances include concertos with the Ocala Symphony, the Marquette Symphony, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. Jay has recorded for Parma, Nonesuch, and Broadway Records and on 2025 and 2026 Grammy-Award nominated releases, and they have been heard on radio/TV across the US, Australia, and Europe both as musician and equity advocate. They are a 2025 recipient of an Interdisciplinary New York State Council for the Arts grant and a 2025 YoungArts Alumni Microgrant to support the development of their original musical/literary/visual work *america is in the heart*, and will serve as a *Tell Your Story* fellow at the 2026 Spoleto Music Festival, working with members of the Charleston, SC community to devise a collaborative artistic work through the lens of local experiences. They look forward to a renewed commitment to new music in the 2025-2026 season; highlights include shows with the BlackBox Ensemble in an all-Asian-American music program at National Sawdust, celebrating the album release of Charles Gaines' *Manifestos 6* at CAP UCLA, and regional premieres of works by James Lee III, Courtney Bryan, and themselves in a duo tour of the Midwest with pianist Josh Tatsuo Cullen.

A prizewinner in competitions held by the Music Teachers National Association, the National Federation of Music Clubs, and the YoungArts Foundation, Jay is indebted to the Virtu Foundation and the American Viola Society for further support in the form of instrument and bow loans during their studies. They are an alumnus of the Music Academy of the West, the New York String Orchestra Seminar and the Yellow Barn Young Artists Program, with other festival appearances at Aspen (New Horizons Fellow), Pacific, Spoleto, and Cabrillo. As educator, Jay has served as a Teaching Fellow at the Juilliard School's Music Advancement Program, on faculty at the Stony Brook University Chamber Strings Camp, and as substitute viola & chamber music faculty at the Manhattan School of Music Precollege Division. They have been invited to serve on grant panels for the New York State Council for the Arts, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and the MAP Fund.

After starting formal musical training at 14, Jay graduated from the Interlochen Arts Academy, received a BM from the Manhattan School of Music at 20 and a MM from the Juilliard School as a full-tuition Susan W. Rose Fellow, studying with Renee Skerik, Karen Ritscher, Heidi Castleman, Misha Amory, and Matthew Lipman. Other important mentors include Leilehua Lanzilotti, Todd Low, and Saskia Hamilton. Away from the instrument, Jay is an award-winning poet; their work can be found in the *Cincinnati Review*, the *Mississippi Review*, and elsewhere.

Born in Hawaii and raised outside of Detroit, Japanese-American pianist and conductor **Josh Tatsuo Cullen** is acclaimed for his “astounding mixture of coolness and intensity” (Stuttgart Zeitung) and has been praised for his “delicious” collaboration by The New York Times. His professional career began at age nine when he performed and recorded Mozart’s Piano Concerto in A major, K. 488 with the Moscow Philharmonic. Since then, he has appeared as soloist with the Detroit Symphony, Chicago Sinfonietta, Fort Worth Symphony, Ann Arbor Symphony, and Otsu Philharmonic orchestras. As collaborative pianist, Josh toured Taiwan with violinist Sheng-Ching Hsu in 2025, performing and recording the world premiere of *Danse de Ballet en Solo* by Apple Chang at the National Performing Arts Center in Taipei and the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts at Weiwuying.

Josh’s deep interest in works by underrepresented composers led him to record *Scenes in Tin Can Alley: Piano Music of Florence Price*, which introduced the first commercial recordings of many of Price’s newly rediscovered solo piano miniatures. Gramophone called it an “absolutely lovely disc” played with “flair, finesse, and conviction.” The album is frequently heard on radio stations across the country, and Josh’s live performance of “Clouds” has been broadcast nationally multiple times on the public radio program *Performance Today*. He recorded the world premiere of *Recuerdos Diaspóricos* (2018) by fellow Michigan native James Lee III, as well as Beethoven’s piano concertos nos. 1, 2 and 3, and Mozart’s concerto for two pianos with his mentor, Paul Badura-Skoda and the Czech National Symphony. Equally at home in musical theater, Josh served as music associate on *Hamilton* (Angelica Tour) and associate conductor on *Frozen* (1st National Tour) and *Beauty and the Beast* (30th Anniversary Tour). He has also been a vocal coach for summer music theater programs at New York University.

Josh holds a master’s degree in solo piano from The Juilliard School and a master’s degree in collaborative piano from New York University. He earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Michigan at age 16. His principal piano teachers include Jerome Lowenthal, Arthur Greene, and Grant Wenaus. Josh is a proud U.S. army veteran, having spent a decade training host nation forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Philippines. His YouTube channel, [@armypianist](#), features his own original solo piano arrangements of video game music.